

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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R 271116Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9661

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY DACCA

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT AND PARAGRAPH NUMBERING)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES IN THE PUNJAB

BEGIN SUMMARY: UDF PROTEST WEEK HAS COME AND GONE WITH ONLY
MILD RIPPLE ON SURFACE OF PUNJABI POLITICS. IN ATMOSPHERE
OF CONTINUED DISARRAY AND BICKERING WITHIN OPPOSITION RANKS,
ASGHAR KHAN'S TEHRIK PROFITS BY APPEARANCE OF MOVEMENT AND UNITY.
END SUMMARY.

1. UDF PROTEST WEEK. UDF PROTEST WEEK, BEGUN ON JULY 20,
FINISHED TODAY, JULY 27, HAVING MADE LITTLE DISCERNIBLE
IMPRESSION ON POLITICAL LIFE IN THE PUNJAB. PRIOR TO
INAGURATION OF WEEK'S ACTIVITIES, UDF ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR
PUBLIC MEETINGS IN EVERY PART OF PUNJAB (EXCEPT, INTERESTINGLY,
BAHAWALPUR, AN OMMISSION POSSIBLY DESIGNED TO KEEP UDF OUT
OF THORNY BAHAWALPUR AUTONOMY PROBLEM), INTENT BEING TO OB-
SERVE "BALUCHISTAN DAY", TO CONDEMN GOVT'S
ANTI-DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES, TO COMPLAIN AGAINST RISING PRICES, ETC.

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ANNOUNCE-

MENT BROUGHT IMMEDIATE REJOINDERS FROM PUNJAB PPP LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING GOVERNOR KHAR, TO EFFECT THAT OPPOSITION WAS ATTEMPTING TO SPREAD DESPAIR AMONG MASSES, THAT 'PROTEST WEEK' WAS CONSPIRACY DESIGNED TO BRING HARM TO PRESTIGE AND UNITY OF PAKISTAN, THAT IT WAS SAME SORT OF GAME OPPOSITION HAD PLAYED LAST YEAR WITH SIND LANGUAGE RIOTS (SIC) AND CAMPAIGN AGAINST BANGLADESH RECOGNITION, AND THAT PEOPLES' GOVT WOULD FRUSTRATE OPPOSITION'S CHALLENGE TO LAW AND ORDER.

2. IN PRACTICE, UDF BARELY MANAGED TO GET ITS SHOW OFF THE GROUND. IN LAHORE ON JULY 20 UDF ATTEMPTED TO HOLD MEETING AT MUSLIM LEAGUE CENTRAL OFFICE IN DEFIANCE OF SECTION 144. A LAHORE CITY MAGISTRATE WAS ON HAND WITH A SIZEABLE CONTINGENT OF POLICE WITH PREDICTABLE RESULT THAT PARTY MEMBERS SCUFFLED WITH POLICE, NUMBER WERE ARRESTED, AND SECOND-LEVEL PARTY LEADERS MADE THEIR SPEECHES INDOORS TO HANDFUL OF HARDIEST WORKERS. ON FOLLOWING DAY, YOUNG JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI WORKERS VIOLATED SECTION 144 IN LAHORE TO DEMONSTRATE AGAINST BANGLADESH RECOGNITION, CLASHED WITH POLICE, AND WERE DISPERSED. ON JULY 22, FINAL MEETING IN LAHORE WAS HELD QUIETLY IN HOME OF LOCAL NAP LEADER. IN MULTAN UDF WORKERS CLASHED WITH PPP FOLLOWERS WHEN GOVERNOR KHAR PASSED THROUGH AT BEGINNING OF PROTEST WEEK; PPP WORKERS BACKED BY POLICE REPORTEDLY WON THE SKIRMISH.

3. UDF HAS PROMISED TO HOLD ALL-PAKISTAN CONVENTION IN LAHORE ON JULY 28-29. INTENT ACCORDING TO OPPOSITION PRESS IS TO CHALK OUT FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION IN VIEW OF UDF CONTENTION THAT BHUTTO HAS CONSISTENTLY FAILED TO FULFILL PROMISES HE HAS MADE TO OPPOSITION DURING SO-CALLED RECONCILIATION MEETINGS.

4. TEHRIK-I-ISTIQLAL. AGAIN, TEHRIK MANAGED TO GIVE APPEARANCE OF GREATER FORCEFULNESS AND ACTIVITY THAN UDF IN RECENT DAYS. ASGHAR KHAN ARRIVED IN LAHORE ON JULY 18, BOASTED TO NEWSMEN AND PARTY WORKERS OF HAVING JUST VIOLATED SECTION 144 IN RAWALPINDI, AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE INTENDED TO REPEAT HIS DEFIANCE IN LAHORE. LATER IN DAY HE CARRIED OUT VIOLATION BY HOLDING PUBLIC MEETING IN CROWDED SECTION OF OLD CITY. HEAVY CONTINGENT OF POLICE WAS PRESENT BUT MADE NO ATTEMPT TO BREAK UP MEETING. DUTY MAGISTRATE AT MEETING TOLD REPORTERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT VIOLATION "WOULD CERTAINLY BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF GOVT." ON FOLLOWING DAY, GOVT ANNOUNCED ARRESTS OF 10 TEHRIK WORKERS WHO WERE RELEASED ON BAIL ON JULY 24.

5. ELSEWHERE IN PUNJAB, TEHRIK HELD PUBLIC MEETING IN OKARA TOWN, SAHIWAL DISTRICT TEXTILE CENTER, ON JULY 25 IN DEFIANCE LOCAL SECTION 144. MEETING WAS ADDRESSED BY TEHRIK (FORMER PPP) MNA AHMAD RAZA KASURI BEFORE BEING BROKEN UP BY

POLICE LATHI CHARGE. IN MULTAN ON SAME DAY TEHRIK WORKERS GATHERED TO SALUTE ASGHAR KHAN WHO WAS SCHEDULED TO STOP ENROUTE TO KARACHI. PLANE DID NOT STOP DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER BUT MEANWHILE POLICE BLOCKADED ROUTES TO AIRPORT; PRESS REPORTED SEVERAL CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE AND TEHRIK WORKERS IN VICINITY OF AIRPORT.

6. WHILE IN LAHORE, ASGHAR KHAN ANNOUNCED THAT TEHRIK OFFICE WOULD SET UP IN DACCA (LAHORE 0859). LATER PRESS REPORTS CLAIMED TEHRIK WAS MAKING CONTACT WITH BANGLADESH ELEMENTS THROUGH PAKISTANIS IN UK; IMROZE REPORTED JULY 25 THAT ASGHAR HAS SENT PERSONAL EMISSARY, SYED NUSRAT ALI SHAH, TO BRITAIN TO PURSUE MATTER OF TEHRIK ACTIVITIES IN BANGLADESH. MIDDLE LEVEL TEHRIK OFFICIAL, USUALLY RELIABLE IN PAST, TELLS US PRESS REPORTS ARE ACCURATE; ASGHAR, HE EXPLAINED, IS CONVINCED HE IS ONLY MAN WHO HAS CHANCE OF BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN TWO WINGS AND THAT HIS ACTIVITIES IN THIS REGARD ARE NET POLITICAL PLUS TO HIM HERE.

7. COMMENT: EVEN OPPOSITION PRESS HAS DIFFICULT TIME THESE DAYS TRYING TO MAKE UDF LOOK ALIVE. IN MIDST OF LIMITED NEWS ABOUT UDF PROTEST WEEK ACTIVITIES, PAPERS HAVE BEEN SPOTTED WITH ITEMS ABOUT SPLITS WITHIN JAMIAT-UL-ULAMA-E-PAKISTAN, ABOUT DISARRAY WITHIN RANKS OF PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE, ABOUT FORMER JUI AMIR MUFTI MAHMUD PREDICTING EARLY DISSOLUTION OF UDF, AND ABOUT NAP TAKING DEVIOUS WAY OUT IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON QUESTION OF BANGLADESH RECOGNITION. OPPOSITION FIGURES TRIED THEIR BEST TO EXPLOIT NEWS THAT BHUTTO'S TRIP TO U.S. HAD TO BE POSTPONED, ALLEGING THAT POSTPONEMENT PROVED THAT U.S. WAS UNHAPPY WITH BHUTTO, BUT THEME FELL FLAT AFTER FEW DAYS WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS EVEN TO MOST SUSPICIOUS OPPOSITION MEMBER THAT POSTPONEMENT WAS NECESSARY. WITH AFGHAN COUP, PUNJABIS IMMEDIATELY LOOKED AT NAP IN PARTICULAR TO COME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FORTH WITH PUBLIC CRITICISM OF DAUD'S STATEMENTS ON PAKHTUNI-STAN; WALI'S SILENCE HAS HAD EFFECT HERE OF ERODING NAP'S FEEBLE STRENGTH IN PUNJAB EVEN FURTHER. IN SUM, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ASGHAR'S TEHRIK WHICH AS ADVANTAGE OF APPEARING FAIRLY ACTIVIST IN A SLOW FIELD, OPPOSITION IN PUNJAB CONTINUES TO POSE LITTLE PRESENT THREAT TO BHUTTO OR PPP.
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